



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Bureau of the Census
Washington, DC 20233-0001

MEMORANDUM FOR

Distribution

From:

Cynthia Clark
Associate Director for Methodology and Standards

Subject:

Evaluation of Nonresponse Followup Operation

I am pleased to present the executive summary for the evaluation study for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. The dress rehearsal was conducted in three sites — Columbia, South Carolina; Menominee County, Wisconsin; and Sacramento, California. The evaluation studies cover detailed aspects of eight broad areas related to the census dress rehearsal — census questionnaire, address list, coverage measurement, coverage improvement, promotion activities, procedures for nonrespondents to mail census, field operations, and technology.

The executive summary for each evaluation study is also available on the Census Bureau Internet site (<http://www.census.gov/census2000> and click on the link to “Evaluation”). Copies of the complete report may be obtained by contacting Carnelle Sligh at (301) 457-3525 or by e-mail at carnelle.e.sligh@census.gov.

The evaluations are distributed broadly to promote the open and thorough review of census processes and procedures. The primary purpose of the dress rehearsal is to simulate portions of the environment we anticipate for Census 2000, so we can identify and correct potential problems in the processes. Thus, the purpose of the evaluation studies is to provide analysis to support time critical review and possible refinements of Census 2000 operations and procedures.

The analysis and recommendations in the evaluation study reports are those of staff working on specific evaluations and, thus, do not represent the official position of the Census Bureau. They represent the results of an evaluation of a component of the census plan. They will be used to analyze and improve processes and procedures for Census 2000. The individual evaluation recommendations have not all yet been reviewed for incorporation in the official plan for Census 2000. These evaluation study reports will be used as input to the decision making process to refine the plans for Census 2000.

The Census Bureau will issue a report that synthesizes the recommendations from all the evaluation studies and provides the Census Bureau review of the dress rehearsal operation. This report will also indicate the Census Bureau’s official position on the

utilization of these results in the Census 2000 operation. This report will be available July 30th.

Evaluation of the Nonresponse Followup Operation (A1b)

Evaluation of the Mail Return Questionnaire (A2)

Evaluation of Telephone Questionnaire Assistance (A4)

Service Based Enumeration Coverage Yield Evaluation (D1)

Effectiveness of Paid Advertising (E1a)

Promotion Evaluation: Exposure to Paid Advertising and Likelihood of Returning a Census Form (E1b)

Field Infrastructure: EEO Process (G7)

Evaluation of the Housing Unit Coverage on the Master Address File (B1)

Nonresponse Followup Operation

April 1999

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Decennial Statistical Studies Division

For questions regarding this summary or to request a copy of the full report, contact the Planning, Research, and Evaluation Division, Bureau of the Census (301) 457-3525.

Executive Summary

The aim of this operational summary was to track the receipt of enumerator questionnaires by check-in date at the corresponding Local Census Office for each site and to develop a response profile of nonresponse followup sample units. This profile identified the percent of final attempt cases, the percent enumerated with proxy respondents, and the percent which had unknown occupancy status on the Census Unedited File after nonresponse followup.

Nonresponse followup is a field operation conducted to obtain census data from households that did not complete a questionnaire by other means. In the South Carolina and Menominee test sites, we conducted nonresponse followup for all housing units in the mailout/mailback and update/leave universes for which we had not checked in a questionnaire by May 7. A key component of the dress rehearsal was testing sampling procedure for housing units in the nonresponse followup universe and the vacant undeliverable as addressed universe in the Sacramento test site. The primary purposes of the sampling were to save money and time. Nonresponse followup sampling was implemented independently for each census tract, and the sampling rates were designed to raise each tract completion rate to at least 90 percent. Field staff enumerated only the selected addresses; those not enumerated had their data estimated based on nonresponse followup neighbors that were enumerated. The nonresponse followup operation was scheduled to occur from May 14 - June 26, 1998 in Sacramento and Menominee. It was to run for an additional two weeks in South Carolina (end date of July 10).

In Sacramento, approximately 54.9 percent of all nonresponse followup questionnaires were checked in by June 5 (about halfway through the Sacramento nonresponse followup operation). A large majority of the questionnaires from the South Carolina site were checked in early in the operation. Approximately 81.9 percent of all nonresponse followup questionnaires were checked in by June 12 (about halfway through the South Carolina nonresponse followup operation). The check-in of nonresponse followup questionnaires in Menominee seemed to peak toward the middle of the operation. Approximately 58.4 percent of all nonresponse followup questionnaires were checked in by June 5 (about halfway through the Menominee nonresponse followup operation). In all three sites, long form enumerator questionnaires exhibited a slower rate of return than the short forms, possibly for the reason that enumerators procrastinated completing them or that respondents were likely to postpone the lengthy interview or designate a more convenient time for giving the detailed information. One might recommend that we take more action to ensure that long form housing units are being enumerated early in the nonresponse followup operation, since long form data quality could be adversely affected by the disparity.

The receipt of Sacramento nonresponse followup questionnaires completed by interviewing non-household members for occupied housing units was different from that of the nonresponse followup universe as a whole. Questionnaires completed via proxy were checked in at a slower overall pace, as approximately 37.6 percent were checked in through June 5. The receipt of South Carolina proxy questionnaires from occupied housing units was somewhat similar to the nonresponse followup questionnaire pattern of receipt as a whole, though the rate of check-in was slightly slower. Most of the proxy questionnaires were checked in during the early part and the

middle of the operation, as 72.9 percent of them were checked in by June 12. The Menominee proxy questionnaires from occupied housing units were not consistent in check-in distribution with the entire nonresponse followup questionnaire universe. The majority of these questionnaires were checked in during the later stages of the operation, as 33.9 percent had been checked in by June 5.

The Report Card goal of keeping the portion of the nonresponse followup universe enumerated via proxy to less than 6 percent of the nonresponse followup universe failed in all three sites. In Sacramento 20.1 percent of the occupied nonresponse followup universe were enumerated via proxy. In South Carolina 16.4 percent of the occupied nonresponse followup universe were enumerated via proxy. In Menominee 11.5 percent of the occupied nonresponse followup were enumerated via proxy. The results were so distant from the goal that investigation into whether enumerators were correctly following procedure would be worthwhile. The results indicate that interviews with actual household members were not nearly as easy to obtain as was hoped, and the quality of the data - especially for the long form questionnaires - should be a concern.

Assuming that enumerators properly marked the final attempt procedure item on the Simplified Enumerator Questionnaire, it seems that final attempt procedures in Sacramento were not followed properly. Greater than 5 percent (approximately 8.9 percent) of the nonresponse followup universe were enumerated during final attempt procedures. The intended rule was that final attempt procedures for each Crew Leader District within the site were not to begin until 95 percent of the housing unit workload in that area had been completed. It does appear that long form housing units were more difficult to enumerate, as a substantially larger portion of those housing units were enumerated via final attempt procedures than were the short form housing units (20.4 percent as opposed to 6.9 percent). Final attempt procedures were apparently successful in South Carolina, as 3.2 percent of the housing units indicated that information was obtained during final attempt procedures. Again, long form housing units appear more likely to be enumerated during the final attempt procedures than short form housing units (5.6 percent as opposed to 2.7 percent). In Menominee it seems that either the final attempt procedures were not utilized or unnecessary or the enumerators did not properly complete the item on the questionnaire, since only one questionnaire indicates having been completed during final attempt procedures. Based on these results, the Report Card goal of keeping the number of final attempt cases fewer than 5 percent of the nonresponse followup universe was achieved in South Carolina and Menominee but not in Sacramento.

Another Report Card goal for the nonresponse followup operation was that less than 0.05 percent of the Census Unedited File's entire housing unit inventory excluding those cases sampled out for nonresponse followup be left with an unclassified occupancy status. In Sacramento the standard was not achieved, as 1.0 percent of the appropriate housing units found on the Census Unedited File were unclassified. In South Carolina the goal was not met, as 1.1 percent of the Census Unedited File's housing units were unclassified. In Menominee the goal was not met, as 0.8 percent of the Census Unedited File's housing units were unclassified. It should be noted, however, that fulfillment of this goal is not necessarily a reflection of the success of nonresponse followup. The majority of these housing units that had no occupancy status were left unclassified due to lost forms or glitches in the data capture process rather than failure to reach housing units

during nonresponse followup.

The tables below summarize the results of this analysis based on the goals for the nonresponse followup operation.

Summary of the Achievement of Nonresponse Followup Operational Goals in Sacramento

5 percent or less of the nonresponse followup workload was final attempt	Not achieved
6 percent or less of the nonresponse followup workload via proxy interviews	Not achieved
0.05 percent or less of the Census Unedited File left unclassified	Not achieved

Summary of the Achievement of Nonresponse Followup Operational Goals in South Carolina

5 percent or less of the nonresponse followup workload was final attempt	Achieved
6 percent or less of the nonresponse followup workload via proxy interviews	Not achieved
0.05 percent or less of the Census Unedited File left unclassified	Achieved

Summary of the Achievement of Nonresponse Followup Operational Goals in Menominee

5 percent or less of the nonresponse followup workload was final attempt	Achieved*
6 percent or less of the nonresponse followup workload via proxy interviews	Not achieved
0.05 percent or less of the Census Unedited File left unclassified	Not achieved

*It appears that either the final attempt procedure was not utilized or unnecessary or that the enumerators did not properly complete the questionnaire item.